

Through the Looking Glass: Philip Roth's Plot Against America

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"Fear" is the first word of Philip Roth's new novel, *The Plot against America*. "Fear," he tells us, "presides over these memories, a perpetual fear." The memories in question are Roth's, of growing up in a Jewish family in Newark, New Jersey. The fear comes from the one alteration of history that turns these memories into what Roth referred to in an interview with Robert Siegel on NPR as "a kind of false memoir." The premise of the novel is that Charles Lindbergh was elected president in 1940. Everything else in the book follows from that premise and from Roth's ethnic paranoia and his ethnic bigotry. The most significant thing about Roth's book is the fact that it's fiction. *The Plot against America* is a Jewish fantasy, which is interesting first of all for what it tells us about Roth personally but also because of what it tells us about the ethnic group which has accepted his paranoid Jewish fantasy as something to be taken seriously by people other than psychiatrists and cultural pathologists.

To give an early example of the kind of fear which pervades the novel, seven-year-old Philip sees a German beer garden on a trip to Union, New Jersey, the town his father is thinking of moving the family to, to take advantage of a promotion at the insurance firm where he is employed. What follows is the 71-year-old's bigotry projected into the mind of his seven-year-old name-sake. What ordinary Americans might consider "the homey acre of open-air merriment smack in the middle of town" was in fact something "called a beer garden." and before you know it the beer garden becomes the American equivalent of Auschwitz, according to the following logic: "the beer garden had something to do with the German-American Bund, the German American Bund had something to do with Hitler, and Hitler, as I hadn't to be told, had everything to do with persecuting Jews." The beer garden was the place where Americans drank "the intoxicant of anti-Semitism. That's what I came to imagine them all so carefully drinking in their beer garden that day—like all the Nazis everywhere, downing pint after pint of anti-Semitism as though imbibing the universal remedy." All this passes through the mind of an allegedly seven-year-old child while driving past in a car.



Roth's book is some indication that anti-Semitism is the universal remedy, but not in the way that Roth indicates. Charges of anti-Semitism have become the universal remedy to unwelcome discourse. They are also the universal remedy to an accurate history of the 20th century. As evidence of the anti-Semitism which was raging in America on the eve of America's entry into World War II (and also of unwelcome discourse which got silenced), Roth cites Charles Lindbergh's Des Moines radio speech at an America First rally; in fact, he gives the entire speech in an appendix to the book. This is a mistake, at least from the point of view of what Roth wants to achieve, because it says the opposite of what Roth wants Lindbergh to say. In the speech we read, among other things, Lindbergh's statement; "No person with a sense of dignity of mankind can condone the persecution of the Jewish race in Germany," This does not sound like the raving of an anti-Semite. Lindbergh's point was that three groups were trying to get America into the War at the time—the Roosevelt administration, the English, and the Jews—and that the Jews "would be the first to feel its consequences" because "tolerance cannot survive war and devastation." It was the last time that anyone in public life in America singled out Jews as a group for criticism. Lindbergh and America First were silenced after the Roosevelt administration entered the war, and they have been demonized ever since. Roth's book is one more contribution to that demonization.

If Lindbergh was talking about Europe, however, he was profoundly right in a way that no one could have understood at the time. War provided the cover for the annihilation of large numbers of Jews in Europe. If Lindbergh was talking about America, he was wrong because—*pace*, Mr. Roth—there were no pogroms in America. So which Lindbergh is Philip Roth talking about? He is talking about the Lindbergh in his mind, a fictional prop that is dragged out to justify Roth's hatred of the *goyim* and his deep ambivalence toward an America that, even more than Renaissance Poland, has been the *paradisus Judaeorum*. The ambivalence comes out best in an argument between Roth's parents. Roth's father is

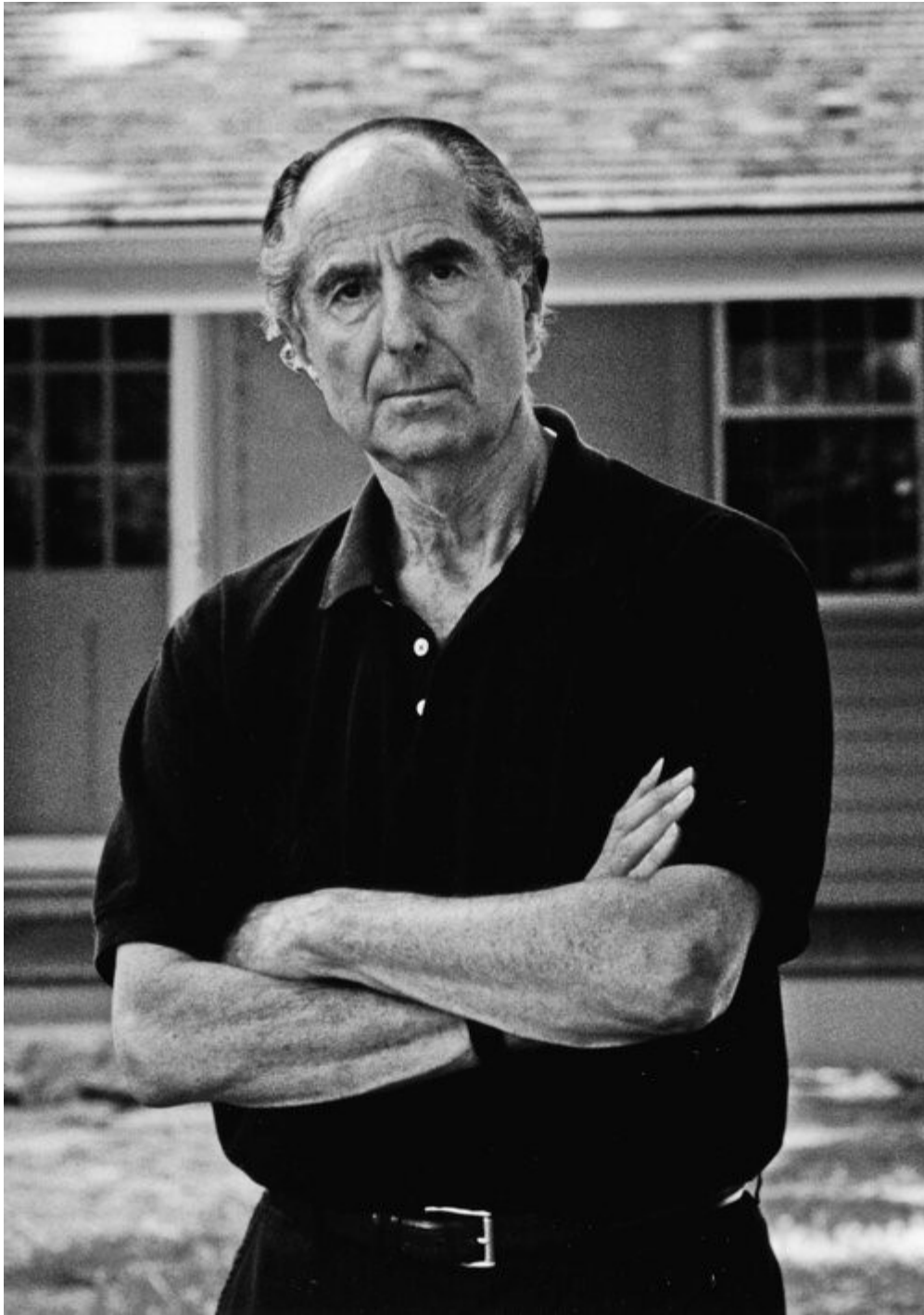
outraged by the programs of President Lindbergh, shouting “This is our country,” Roth’s mother, on the other hand, responds by saying, “Not anymore. It’s Lindbergh’s. It’s the *goyims’*. It’s their country.” In other words, the book revolves around the unhealthy dichotomy—it’s our country/it’s their country—without any understanding of why the dichotomy is unhealthy. Roth’s book is exactly what he says it is. It is a “false memoir.” It is a distortion of history for political and racial purposes. It is also an exercise in bigotry and slander. Anything is justified because Roth considers his foes the embodiment of evil and as fully worthy of the hatred he lavishes on them. Roth is no longer promoting sexual liberation, as he did in *Portnoy’s Complaint*, but the hatred and bigotry are still there, even if the twisted humor is gone.

Because it is a “false memoir,” Roth’s book is the mirror image of what was really going on. If there was such a thing as fascist America, it was created by Roth’s hero Franklin Delano Roosevelt. If there were ever “a plot to replace American democracy with the absolute authority of a despotic rule” in America, Roosevelt inaugurated it, and the presidents who have succeeded him simply implemented what he inaugurated.

The first program which creates indignation among the Roth family is Lindbergh’s “Just Folks Program,” which sends Jewish children off to places like Kentucky—one of the two centers of evil in Roth’s America (the other is Detroit), where Philip’s brother works on a tobacco farm near Danville. “The only purpose of this so-called Just Folks,” Roth tells us, “is to make Jewish children into a fifth column and turn them against their parents.”

Well, that sounds like a plausible explanation of the purpose behind a government program of this sort. But just who was proposing this sort of the thing in the 1930s? The answer is just about everyone in power at the time. The Nazis had their *Hitlerjugend*, but unmentioned in Roth’s account is that Stalin’s *Comsomol* was doing the same sort of thing, and unmentioned as well is the fact that “Just Folks” bears an eerie resemblance to the Civilian Conservation Corps, which was, of course, instituted by Roosevelt. According to Roth’s fantasy, Jews “were being coerced to be other than the Americans we were.” Lindbergh had ordered that Jews were “to be shipped thousands of miles from family and friends. . . . The Jews will be scattered far and wide to wherever Hitlerite America Firsters flourish.”

Louis Wirth and Ethnic Cleansing



PHILIP ROTH

If this sounds vaguely familiar, it is because this sort of thing did happen in America at around the same time Roth's novel takes place, but it was done by the Roosevelt administration and not by some fictional Lindbergh, and because it was done to other ethnic groups, not to Jews. *The Plot Against America* is the Jewish version of *Through the Looking Glass*; everything is pretty much the same, but politically

reversed. The American government never rounded up Jews, but it did round up and inter Japanese Americans on the West Coast. Roth's hero, Roosevelt, like Roosevelt's hero Stalin, engaged in active ethnic cleansing at the time the novel takes place. The great theoretician of ethnic cleansing in America was Louis Wirth, a Jew who was also a sociologist at the University of Chicago and an admirer of Stalin as a man who based his solution to the nationalities problem in the Soviet Union on the highest moral principles. The genocide in the Ukraine was directed by another Jew, Lazar Kaganovich, who also ran the Gulag Archipelago for Stalin long after that worthy had purged less subservient Jews like Trotsky from the Communist Party. So, to translate from the Jewish version of *Through the Looking Glass* back to reality, Roth is accusing the America Firsters of perpetrating on Jews what the Jewish agents of Stalin and Roosevelt were actually perpetrating on other ethnic groups, most notably the Japanese and the Catholic ethnics in America, and the Ukrainians, the Volga Deutsch, the Kalmyks, and many others in the Soviet Union. The psychologists call this projection, and it is usually associated with guilt, but more on that later.

The next step in President Lindbergh's attempt "to establish the 'American Fascist New Order,' a totalitarian dictatorship modeled on Hitler's," is known as "the Good Neighbor Project," which is a government program "designed to introduce a steadily increasing number of non-Jewish residents into predominantly Jewish neighborhoods and in this way 'enrich' the 'Americanness' of everyone involved." Being a boy wise beyond his years, seven-year-old Philip understands that "the underlying goal" of the Good Neighbor Project "was to weaken the solidarity of the Jewish social structure as well as to diminish whatever electoral strength a Jewish community might have in local and congressional elections." In order to bring this about in Newark, where the Roths lived at the time, "Flats vacated in September . . . were occupied by Italian families up from the First Ward. Essentially their new living quarters had been assigned to them by out-right government edict. By the next time that Lindbergh would run for president "a Christian majority might well be dominant in at least half of America's twenty most heavily populated Jewish neighborhoods as early as the start of Lindbergh's second term and a resolution of America's Jewish Question close at hand, by one means or another."

If all of this sounds vaguely familiar, it's because it did happen in America, but it didn't happen under Lindbergh, and it didn't happen to the Jews. As I have shown in detail in *The Slaughter of the Cities: Urban Renewal as Ethnic Cleansing*, the Office of War Information, under the guidance of people like Louis Wirth and Archibald MacLeish, had inaugurated a campaign moving black sharecroppers from the South into government-funded housing projects which were deliberately built in Catholic ethnic neighborhoods, "to weaken the solidarity of the [Catholic] social structure as well as to diminish whatever electoral strength a [Catholic] community might have in local and congressional elections."

In other words, to paraphrase the title of the Sinclair Lewis novel which served as Roth's model, it could happen here. In fact, it did happen here, but in a way that was the mirror-image of the story presented in Roth's novel. No one ever singled out the Jews for ethnic cleansing in America, but Louis Wirth, the Jew, was orchestrating the destruction of Catholic neighborhoods, by precisely the methods Roth mentions in his Good Neighbor Project. Confronted by the prospect of the ethnic cleansing of his neighborhood, young Philip Roth vows that "Nothing would ever get me to leave here. . . . would not be driven by the United States government from a street whose very gutters gushed with the elixir of life." Of course, Philip and his Family were driven from their home in Newark by the very people who are the heroes of his book—"There are still good men in this country. There is Roosevelt, there is Ickes, there is Mayor La Guardia." But they were not driven from their homes by government orchestrated black

migration because they were Jews. They were driven out of Newark because they were still vaguely ethnic, even if they supported the war against fascism, and they were driven to live in the suburbs which Roth describes in *Good-bye, Columbus* to make them "white." In this regard Roth *pere* is more prescient than Roth *fils* when he says, "this is what it is like to work for a big company. Big companies transfer people all the time." That was William H. Whyte's point in *The Organization Man*, and it was Whyte who talked about the suburbs as agents of Americanization for unassimilated ethnics.

Warmongers



CHARLES LINDBERGH

So Roth can criticize social engineering of the sort that destroyed his childhood neighborhood, but he can't bring himself to criticize the people who orchestrated it. That would interfere with his political and racial agenda, which depends on his desire to demoniac his enemies and beatify his friends. It would interfere with his hatred, which is to say, the source of his creativity. So he decides to blame the victim instead. Roth blames the people who were against America's entry into World War II for all of the social engineering, ethnic cleansing, and social disruption which the war was used to justify. So when an FBI agent arrives to interrogate the seven-year-old Philip, he tells us that he:

knew enough not to mention Henry Ford, America First, the Southern Democrats or the isolationist Republicans, let alone Lindbergh. Over the past few years, the list I heard at home of the prominent Americans who hated Jews was far longer than that, and then there were the ordinary Americans, tens

of thousands of them, maybe millions of them, like the beer drinkers we didn't want to live beside in Union.

Like many Jews, Roth subscribes to the dogma that anti-Semitism is a pathology whose source is Christianity and which is, therefore, inseparable from Christianity. As a result, anti-Semitism has no relationship to Jewish behavior. Jews are hated for no reason at all. As a result, anti-Semitism, because of its very irrationality, can break out at any time and at any place, even in America, where Jews, as Rabbi Daniel Lapin never tires of saying, never had it better.

If we move from Roth's version of *Through the Looking Glass* to historical reality, we find that the animosity against Jews in both Europe and America had quite definite historical causes. Lindbergh, to cite Roth's chief villain, felt that the Jews were a "danger to this country" because 1) they were driving it to war and 2) because of "the large ownership and influence on our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government." In the speech which he gave to an America First rally in Des Moines, Iowa on September 11, 1941, Lindbergh did not single out the Jews. Instead he listed them along with the English and the Roosevelt Administration as one of the three groups that were determined to get the country into a war with Germany. Lindbergh went on to say, that

I am not attacking either the Jewish or the British people. Both races I admire. But I am saying that the leaders of both the British and the Jewish races, for reasons which are as understandable from their viewpoint as they are inadvisable from ours, for reasons which are not American, wish to involve us in the war.



AMERICA FIRST RALLY FEATURING CHARLES LINDBERGH

Like Lindbergh, Henry Ford, another of Roth's villains, had his reasons as well. Ford characterized Jews as the world's Bolsheviks who were largely responsible for spreading the revolution to Germany. He also felt they were responsible for the Revolution in Russia. Like Lindbergh and Ford, Father Charles Coughlin of Royal Oak, Michigan had his reasons too, but they, again, are not enumerated by Roth.

In one of the more bizarre flights of fantasy in *Plot*, Walter Winchell, the character assassin and gossip columnist, runs for president after he is driven off the air by Lindbergh's forces. This, predictably, drives

the anti-Semites into paroxysms of rage, especially when he appears in Catholic parishes: "Winchell proceeded to draw an angry mob chanting 'Kike, go home!' in every single parish where he displayed his stigmata to the faithful," is how Roth puts it. Equally predictable is the fact that Winchell, who "had become an out-and-out god and more important by far than Adonoy" to Roth, would unleash "the worst and most widespread violence . . . in Detroit," because Detroit was "the midwestern headquarters of the "Radio Priest" Father Coughlin and his Jew-hating Christian Front." Just for the record here, the Christian Front was headed by a Father Brophy from Brooklyn, but facts like that are not important when writing a "false memoir."

Other facts concerning the Radio Priest are equally unimportant. Roth links Coughlin with the Ku Klux Klan, when in fact the Radio Priest began his shrine after the Klan had burned a cross on the lawn of his church in Royal Oak. The rioting, which Coughlin allegedly incited, according to Roth, "had begun at Winchell's first stop in Hamtramck (the residential section inhabited chiefly by auto workers and their families and said to contain the world's largest Polish population outside Warsaw)." Hamtramck was not far from St. Louis the King parish, also home to Polish Catholic ethnics, who had become the beneficiaries of government-sponsored black migration to dilute the ethnic character of the neighborhood—a la Roth's "Good Neighbor's Project"—as well as federal troops when the Poles refused to go along. From Hamtramck, according to Roth's account in *Plot*, the rioting spread to "the city's biggest Jewish neighborhoods, shops were looted and widows broken, Jews trapped outdoors were set upon and beaten and kerosene-soaked crosses were ignited on the lawns of the fancy houses along Chicago Boulevard." It was, in other words, the American version of *Kristallnacht*—something which, of course, never happened in America, in spite of the fact that in 1943, Detroit was the scene of the deadliest race riot in American history.

When it comes to fiction, the reader is supposed to make a "willing suspension of disbelief," but at this and other points in Roth's novel, the reader rebels—perhaps because he recognizes that Roth is not intent on telling any kind of truth in his novel, unless he is forced to tell the truth in spite of himself—after being manipulated by passages like the following:

By nightfall, several hundred of the city's 30,000 Jews had fled and taken refuge across the Detroit River in Windsor, Ontario, and American history had recorded its first large-scale pogrom, one clearly modeled on the "spontaneous demonstrations" against Germany's Jews known as Kristallnacht . . . which Father Coughlin in his weekly tabloid Social Justice, had defended at the time as a reaction by the Germans against "Jewish-inspired Communism."



FR. CHARLES COUGHLIN

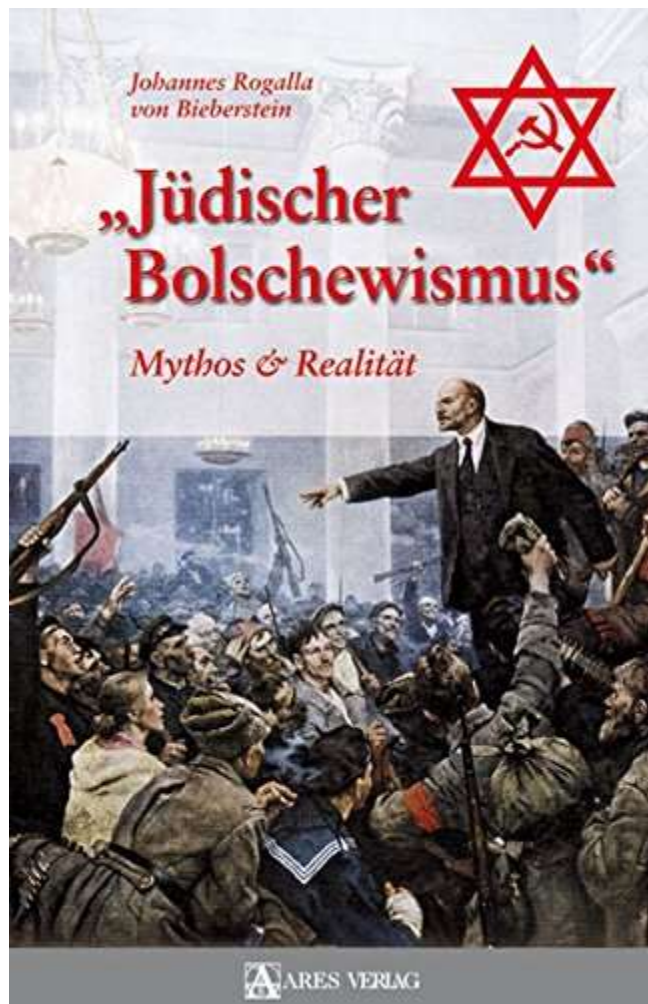
To begin with, Father Coughlin did not defend *Kristallnacht*. He deplored it for what it was. We know this because he devoted a radio program to it on November 20, 1938 entitled "[Persecutions: Jewish and Christian.](#)" Coughlin deplored the violence against the innocent, but he did so in terms that Jews had been formulating for years. "The Trotskys make the revolution," said one rabbi, "but the Bronsteins are the ones who pay for it." The Jews who were visible paid for the excesses of the Jewish Bolsheviks who had changed their names and engaged in the behavior which had caused the precipitous rise of anti-Semitism in the '20s and '30s. In a speech approved by his ordinary, Father Coughlin called on his radio audience "to oppose all persecution, wherever it may originate." Unlike Roth, who sees history as a pretext to inflame ethnic prejudice, Coughlin first condemned the violence and then tried to explain why it happened. That meant dealing with its historical context; that, in turn, meant dealing with Bolshevism, and that, in turn, meant dealing with the Jews. Coughlin felt that the rise of Hitler and the concomitant rise of the Nazi Party to power in Germany was directly related to the Communist menace, which had been raging throughout eastern Europe and Germany ever since the collapse of the great empires in 1919.

He was not alone in this regard. Ruth Fischer claimed that Munich would never have become the birthplace of Nazism without the Bolshevik revolution, which erected the Soviet Republic of Bavaria there in the early '20s. Eugenio Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) was living there at the time as the German nuncio. After visiting the headquarters of the Kurt Eisner government in the Wittelsbach palace, he reported that he had come across a group of women there, whose leader was "Levine's lover, a young Russian, a Jew, and divorced" (*l'amante di Levien: una giovarte russa, ebrea, divorziata*). It was the wretched excesses of the Soviet Republic in Munich which "outraged the people and caused a dramatic increase in anti-Semitism." As before in Russia, all Jews were blamed for the excesses of the revolutionary few. The Bronsteins were paying the price for the Trotskys.

The same thing was true of Austria after the war. In his book *The Truth about Austria*, Guido Zernattos claimed that "the most important basis for modern Austrian anti-Semitism was the part which the Jewish intellectuals played in the leadership of the social democratic party."

Marxism: An Intellectual Posture

Unlike Roth, who manipulates historical events like *Kristallnacht* for political effect, Coughlin tried to explain why it happened, and that involved seeing *Kristallnacht* and the rise of Hitler in their historical context as a reaction against the excesses of Bolshevism, a revolutionary movement which was seen as quintessentially Jewish. In his November 20 speech, Coughlin addresses the Jews directly, asking them to "be not indulgent with the irreligious, atheistic Jews and Gentiles who promote the cause of persecution in the land of the Communist; the same ones who promote the cause of atheism in America." The time had come for condemnations of the excesses of both sides. Gentiles must repudiate the excesses of Nazism. But Jews and Gentiles must repudiate the existence of Communism from which Nazism springs." By linking Jews and Bolshevism, Coughlin earned the ire of a group of people which, as evidenced by Roth's book, continued to smear him as a Jew-hater and Nazi-sympathizer to the present day. But what he had to say then was often mentioned by people who would not normally be associated with anti-Semitism, namely the Jews themselves. Leopold Trepper, the leader of the "Rote Kapelle," the Nazi resistance group that functioned between 1933 and 1939, said it most succinctly when he explained, "I became a communist, because I am a Jew." (*"Ich wurde Kommunist, weil ich Jude bin."*)



[Jüdischer Bolschewismus: Mythos & Realität](#)

The quote comes from Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein's book *„Juedischer Bolschewismus“: Mythos und Realitaet* (SC H Nellroda: Edition Antaios, 2004). Von Bieberstein's book appeared in the same year as Roth's, but you will not find it at Barnes and Noble, where Philip Roth's book is so prominently displayed. In fact, unless you read German, you won't be able to read it at all because, like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's history of the Jews in Russia, *Two Hundred Years Together*, it has not been translated into English. Von Bieberstein's book is the antithesis of Roth's "false memoir." Roth panders to racial prejudice; von Bieberstein marshalls facts and appeals to reason. He has written, as a result, a well-documented piece of history that shows 1) that Bolshevism was a Jewish phenomenon and 2) that it created a wave of anti-Semitic reaction which swept Hitler into power in Germany. Unlike Daniel Goldhagen, who writes histories based on Jewish fictions, and unlike Philip Roth, who writes Jewish novels based on fictitious history, von Bieberstein has written an account of the myths and realities surrounding a topic whose very mention, in the world of Roth and Goldhagen, is *prima facie* evidence of anti-Semitism. Both Goldhagen and Roth subscribe to the most basic tenet of Jewish ideology, namely, that anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jewish behavior. That premise turns all history into a form of political mystification. Von Bieberstein de-mystifies the mystification by documenting in exhaustive detail the role which Jewish Bolshevism played in the rise of Hitler. According to von Bieberstein, Father

Coughlin criticized Nazism, but saw it nonetheless as “a defense mechanism against communism.” In this regard, he differed little from Henry Ford, who feared Jews primarily because he felt they were the leading force in spreading revolution throughout the world.

That fact makes its way via Roth’s Looking Glass into *Plot* in the following way:

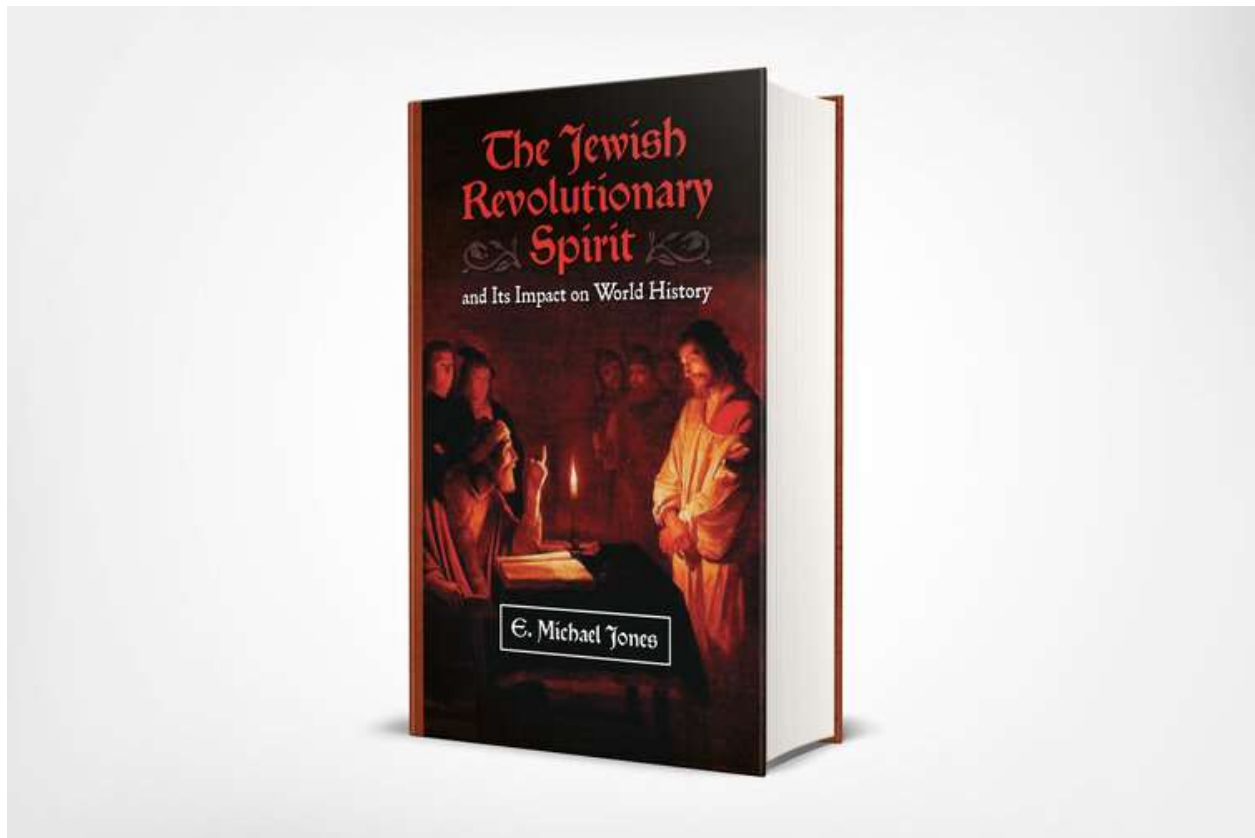
As an anti-Communist rather than a pro-Nazi organization, the Bund was as anti-Semitic as before, openly equating Bolshevism with Judaism in propaganda handouts . . . holding fast to the purposes enunciated in their official declaration on first organizing in 1936: “to combat the Moscow-directed madness of the red world menace and its Jewish bacillus carriers”. . . . Gone were the wall banners proclaiming “Wake up America—Smash Jewish Communists!”

By stating his case this way, Roth gives the impression that anyone who linked Jews and Communism was a raving Nazi anti-Semite, but this was not the case. Ford, as even a cursory reading of von Bieberstein’s book makes clear, was not alone in feeling that Jews played a leading role in Bolshevism. In May of 1919, Woodrow Wilson—no isolationist he!—proclaimed that the Bolshevik movement was led by Jews. At around the same time, in an article in the *Illustrated London News*, Winston Churchill, the same man who sent Intrepid to America to get it involved in World War II and so, presumably, one of Philip Roth’s heroes, said much the same thing. In 1919, Arnold Zweig, who, like Arthur Koestler, was both a Zionist and a Communist, wrote that “Jewish blood” gave birth to socialism “from Moses to Lindauer.” In his *magnum opus*, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, the Jew Ernst Bloch said the same thing in even pithier form when he wrote, in a parody of the Roman saying, “Ubi Petrus, Ibi Ecclesia,” “Ubi Lenin, Ibi Jerusalem.” Elie Wiesel wrote that, “We have to make revolution, because God told us to. God wants us to become communists.” In 1848, Adolf Jellinek wrote that “reactionaries denounce Jews as the perpetuum mobile of the revolution.” In his book, *Der grosse Basar*, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, one of the leaders of the ’68 Revolution, referred to Trotsky as “embodying the essence of the Talmudic Jew.” In 1934, in his book, *Katholizismus und Judentum*, Bela Bangha, the Hungarian Jesuit, wrote that “revolutionary Marxism” corresponded “in its essence to a particular form of the Jewish soul and his intellectual posture.” On December 14, 1918, the *American Literary Digest* asked the question, “Are Bolshewiki mainly Jewish?” Two years later, on June 19, 1920, under the title of “The Jewish Peril,” the *Christian Science Monitor* referred to an alleged world-wide Jewish conspiracy as demonstrated by the newly discovered, and subsequently discredited, *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. On the very same day, the *Chicago Tribune* referred to Bolshevism as “an instrument for Jewish control of the world.”

Jews were no less inclined to speak this way than the *goyim*. In 1921 A. Sachs wrote that, “Jewish Bolshevism has demonstrated to the entire world that the Jewish race is not suffering from degeneracy.” In 1990, in his book [Stalin’s War Against the Jews](#), Louis Rapoport wrote that “men of Jewish heritage,” laid “the foundation for Communism and Socialism.” Franz Werfel, the man who wrote [The Song of Bernadette](#), and who took part in the communist insurrection in Vienna in 1919, wrote an article entitled “Israel’s Gift to Mankind,” in which he said that “Moses Hess, Karl Marx and Ferdinand Lasalle” were the “church fathers of Socialism.” Jacob Toury claimed that socialism grew out of traditional Judaism among the uprooted as substitute religion. In an article entitled “The Jewish Revolutionary,” which appeared in the *Neue Juedischen Monatsheften* toward the end of 1919, the author stated that “no matter how the issue is exaggerated by the anti-Semitic side and no matter how anxiously it is denied by the Jewish bourgeoisie, the huge Jewish participation in the contemporary revolutionary movement is a simple fact.” One year later, Franz Kafka, the famous German-speaking Jew

from Prague, wrote, "You don't forgive the Jewish socialists and communists. You drown them in the soup and slice them up when you're roasting them." (*"Den juedischen Sozialisten und Kommunisten verzeiht man nichts, die ertraenkt man in der Suppe und zerschneidet man beim Braten."*)

Polish Nobel laureate, Isaac B. Singer, who spoke Polish only with difficulty and won the Nobel Prize in literature for writing in Yiddish, claimed that "the communists in Warsaw were almost exclusively Jews, and that they brought fire and sword to all parties. They also claimed [after the October revolution] that social justice could only be found in Russia." Bundespresident Friedrich Ebert claimed that Jews were the people responsible for the revolution in Germany and that "practically every Jew was a crypto-Bolshevik." In 1904, the German Zionist Franz Oppenheimer remarked that "nothing is more certain than that the contemporary Jew in eastern Europe is a born revolutionary." What followed from this all but universal recognition of Jewish participation in Bolshevism was an unprecedented wave of anti-Semitism. What made a racist organization like the Thule society a dangerous threat was precisely the widespread consensus that "there was no such thing as Bolshevism without Jews."



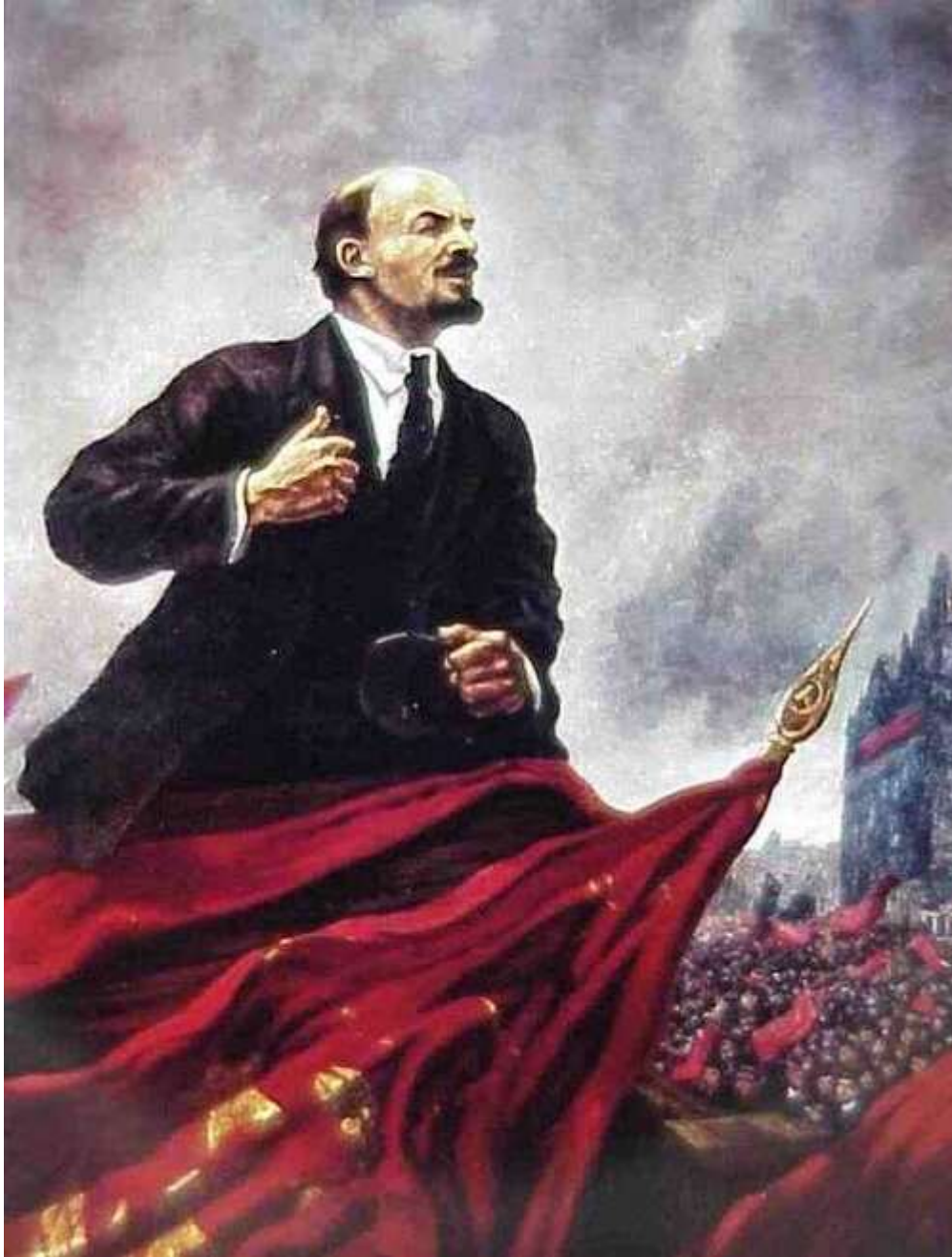
[THE JEWISH REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT - E. MICHAEL JONES](#)

As Erich Haberer makes clear, Jews had been the backbone of the revolutionary movement in Russia. The social dislocation among the central powers which followed defeat after World War I, allowed the revolutionary movement to achieve its greatest successes. The Jews could now avenge themselves on the

traditional Christian monarchies which had always persecuted them. The Jews, according to Michael Lerner “were enthusiastic representatives of the collapse of traditional communities because those communities discriminated against Jews.” Stanley Rothman and S. Robert Lichter maintain that “the goal of the Jewish radicals was to alienate the Christians from their society just as the Jews had been alienated from those same cultures.” In 1849, in *Israel's Herald*, Karl Ludwig Bernays explained that “The Jews took revenge on a hostile world in a completely new way . . . by liberating mankind from every religion and any kind of patriotic sentiment.” In the November 30, 1917 issue of *The Jewish Chronicle*, Trotsky was described “as the Avenger for Jewish suffering and humiliation” under the Czars.”

Von Bieberstein's survey of the contemporary literature on the revolutionary movement in the period around World War I indicates that Jewish involvement was bound up with the Jewish attraction to messianic politics. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, the English racial theorist who married into the Wagner family and became a supporter of Hitler, reproached “Jewish atheists” for “planning an impossible socialistic and economic messianic kingdom without any regard for the fact that in process of doing this they would bring about the destruction of the civilization and culture which we have so laboriously erected.” Ernst Bloch, who described himself in 1918 as a “race conscious Jew,” described the promethean project of the revolutionary Marxists as nothing less than a “second incarnation.” In similar fashion, Eugen Hoeflich, the literary critic from Vienna who later changed his name to Mose Y. BenGavriel, wrote that “the Bolshevik Jew want[s] to set Europe in flames, not to fill his pockets but because he is driven by the purest idea, an idea which manifests an error which will lead to tragic consequences, which came about from a mass psychosis born of the war.”

The Russian Revolution of 1917 was bad enough, but it had nowhere near the psychological effect on public opinion that its daughter revolutions—the short-lived soviet republics of Bavaria and Hungary—had on the populations of eastern Europe. Bela Kun did for the Jews in Hungary what Kurt Eisner did for the Jews of Germany; both men created a huge wave of anti-Semitism in their respective countries. “Jew” became synonymous with “revolutionary,” and soon new labels like “*Umsturzsjuden*,” “*Revolutionsjuden*,” as well as “*RevoluZion*” began to make the rounds. Led by Bela Kun, who magyarized his father's name Kohn at the beginning of the 20th century, the Hungarian Soviet Republik spread fear and loathing among the native Hungarian population, which denounced it as the “*Judenrepublik*.” According to Lichter and Rothman's book *Roots of Radicalism*, 30 of the 48 commissars in the Hungarian Soviet Republic were Jews. Of 202 top officials, 161 were Jews. This and other facts led the *London Times* to describe the Kun Regime as “Jewish Mafia” in 1919. “Bolshevism in Hungary,” according to Nathaniel Katzburg was “largely a Jewish enterprise.” Hence it was no surprise that the Soviet Republic in Budapest was denounced as “rule of the Jews” and “*Judenrepublik*.” Nor was it surprising that a wave of pogroms swept Hungary when the Soviet Republic fell there. The Bronsteins, once again, had to pay for the excesses of the Trotskys.



VLADIMIR LENIN (VLADIMIR ILYICH ULYANOV)

The same was true of Austria, where the dramatist Arthur Schnitzler in his diary described the revolutionaries as “a mixture of literary Jewboys, plundering rabble, and idiots.” The revolution in Hungary made headlines around the world. The net result was a rise in anti-Semitism, and not just in Hungary. In his book on the holocaust in Hungary, Rudolph Braham claimed that the “chiliastic passions” that promoted world revolution led inexorably to counter-revolution, and that the short but brutal communist regime left behind a bitter legacy which had devastating consequences for Hungarian Jews.

The Catholic Church in general, and the Jesuits in particular, were the main opponents of the revolutionary movement in the period leading up to and following World War I. As such, the Catholics were prominent—at this point in time, at least—in pointing out the large Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement. In an article which appeared in the October 21, 1922 issue of the officially recognized Vatican journal *La Civiltà Cattolica* entitled “*La rivoluzione mondiale e gli ebrei*,” (World Revolution and the Jews), Communism was described as “the perversion of a Semitic fantasy” emanating “from the Jewish race.” In his 1926 book *Judentum und Christentum*, Father Erich Przywara, SJ, used quotes from Martin Buber and other Jewish thinkers to trace socialism back to its roots in Jewish messianism, forcing him to the melancholy conclusion that the Jew “is driven to become the tireless revolutionary of the Christian world by an inner necessity.” In the final analysis, the Jew is “driven to his tireless activism by his deepest religious convictions. He is truly the restless Ahasver.”

In similar fashion, the Polish bishops traced the Bolshevik fury that had been unleashed on eastern Europe in the wake of World War I back to the “traditional hatred” which Jews had always felt for Christendom. During Poland’s war with the nascent Soviet Union in 1920, the Polish bishops released a pastoral letter in which they announced that

The true goal of Bolshevism is world conquest. The race which has the leadership of Bolshevism in its hands . . . is bent on the subjugation of the nations . . . especially, because those who are the leaders of Bolshevism have the traditional hatred toward Christendom in their blood. Bolshevism is in reality the embodiment and incarnation of the Antichrist on earth.

Like the communist parties in Germany and Hungary, the Communist Party in Poland was overwhelmingly Jewish. Sixty-five percent of the Communists in Warsaw were Jews. In the 1920s, the percentage was even higher, which again fueled anti-Semitism.

Since the German bishops shared the views of their Polish confreres, they got caught up in the same apocalyptic mood. The most famous episcopal opponent of Nazism, Clemens Graf von Galen, bishop of Muenster, wrote a pastoral letter defending Hitler’s incursion into the Soviet Union because it would rid the world of the “plague of Bolshevism.”

The Jewish inclination toward messianic politics explains the overrepresentation of Jews in revolutionary movements throughout the 20th century. Once Poland achieved statehood in the wake of the Versailles Treaty, the Jewish population in the Soviet Union dropped to around two percent of the population, which in turn dramatized the overrepresentation of Jews in the revolutionary parties in Russia. In this regard, the Bolsheviks, with 11 percent Jews, were the least Jewish of all the revolutionary parties, even though Jewish overrepresentation was five times as high as the Jewish population in Russia. The Social Revolutionary Party, by comparison, was 14 percent Jewish, and the Menshevik Party was 23 percent Jewish, with an overrepresentation ten times as high as the percentage of Jewish population in Russia.



MAY DAY DEMONSTRATION - PETROGRAD, RUSSIA, 1919.

If we turn to the leadership of the revolutionary movement, the overrepresentation of Jews is even more striking. Of the 21 members of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Russia in August 1917, six, which is to say 28.6 percent, were Jews. The percentage was even higher among the Mensheviks, where eight of the 17 members of the Central Committee, which is to say just about 50 percent, were Jews. Of the list of the seven leading members of the Bolshevik leadership which Culture Commissar Anatoli Lunatcharsky compiled, four of the seven top Bolsheviks—Trotsky, Sverdlov, Sinovijev, and Kamanev—were Jews. When the Austrian foreign minister, Ottokar Graf Czernin, wrote about the peace negotiations which took place at Brest-Litovsk in the beginning of 1918, he reported that the Soviets were “practically without exception Jews with crazy ideas.” Jews achieved this overrepresentation in the new Soviet regime because Russians tended to be “patriotic” and therefore not ruthless enough in attacking fellow Russians, but also because the Jews, again unlike the Russian “peasants and workers” who formed the backbone of the proletarian movement, were highly literate. By way of illustration, the author of the book *Rossija I Evrei, Russia and the Jews*, told the following joke: “If six commissars are sitting at a table, what’s under the table? The answer, the twelve knees of Israel.”

The percentage of Jews on the staff of the hated Cheka was even higher. As late as July 10, 1934, eight years after Stalin’s takeover of the party, 34 percent of the leadership of the Cheka was still Jewish, a figure 17 times higher than the Jewish population of the Soviet Union. By 1939, however, after the purge of Jews in the party, the percentage sank to 4 percent.

Because of the high percentage of Jews in the revolutionary movements in eastern Europe and Germany, Bolshevism was perceived as a Jewish movement, and because it was so perceived, the excesses which it committed created a huge anti-Semitic reaction. On April 20, 1920, Allen Dulles, later head of the CIA, wrote that “as a result of the leading role which Bavarian Jews played in communist groups, the tolerance of the pre-war era has changed and a new strongly anti-Semitic movement has come into being.” Von Bieberstein writes that “a minority of radical Jews, fighting for the dictatorship of the Proletariat, set loose an avalanche of aggressive anti-Semitism.” Fearing precisely this reaction, the Frankfurt lodge of the B’nai B’rith sent instructions to Bavarian Jews to distance themselves from Kurt Eisner and his Bavarian Soviet Republic. In an article on anti-Semitism in Britain, which appeared in the

Jewish Journal of Sociology in 1989, Geoffrey Alderman wrote that “anti-Semitism flourished in the ‘20s as a result of the fear of Bolshevism.” In his 1996 book *Jews and the Russian Revolution*, Harvard Historian Richard Pipes claimed that one of the “most disastrous consequences” of the Russian Revolution was “the identification of Jews with Communism.” Reinhard Maurach, a legal observer at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, emphasized what he called a “combination theory,” according to which “the Jewish problem merged with the Bolshevik problem” to form the basic outline of Nazi doctrine. Hitler rose to power in Germany because he convinced the overwhelming majority of the German people “that Jews and Bolsheviks were one and the same thing.” National Socialism was a reaction to communism. To ignore this fact or to write as Daniel Jonah Goldhagen does that “anti-Semitism has nothing to do with Jewish behavior” is to render an entire era incomprehensible. Saul Friedlander, likewise, said that “hatred for communism played a greater role in the rise of Hitler than anti-Jewish attitudes.”



ADOLPH HITLER

Hitler was stymied at the beginning of his political career by both Jewish assimilation and German acceptance of that fact, and he could not have turned his followers against the Jews without the threat of Bolshevism in the background and the experience of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, which he referred to as “temporary Jewish rule,” as proof. In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler wrote that “in 1918 it was still not possible to talk about programmatic anti-Semitism. I can still remember the difficulties one encountered as soon as the word Jew was mentioned. You were either looked at as if you were crazy or you encountered the stiffest resistance.” In 1933 Hitler told Max Planck, “I have nothing against the Jews qua Jews. But the Jews are all communists, and these are my enemies, and it is against them that I am fighting.” As evidence that anti-Communism trumped racism in Hitler’s hierarchy of values, von Bieberstein quotes Hitler’s saying, “*Lieber sind mir 100 Neger im Saal, als ein Jude.*” “Better a hundred Negroes in the room than one Jew.” In a diary entry for February 10, 1937, Hans Frank wrote, “I confess

my belief in Germany . . . which is in truth God's tool for the extermination of evil. We are fighting in God's name against the Jews and their Bolshevism, God protect us." Hitler always maintained that the Jew was his enemy primarily because the Jew spread revolution. In a table talk dated June 7, 1944, he was still maintaining that "without Jews there would be no revolution." Nazi theoretician Alfred Rosenberg said much the same thing: "Bolshevism is in its essence the form of Jewish world revolution. . . There is no such thing as Bolshevism without Jews."

A reaction was inevitable. "The greater the successes of the communist movement," Jonathan Frankel wrote in 1988, "the greater the anti-Communist hostility to the Jews became." Hilaire Belloc claimed that "the revolution in Russia was the historical starting point of a renewal of the animosity against the Jews in western Europe."

A Jewish Film Industry and a Nation's Culture



HENRY FORD

Before long, the same reaction reached America. Von Bieberstein claims that the first signs of anti-Semitic reaction in “puritanical America” manifested themselves as a protest against the nascent film industry in Hollywood, an industry which was seen as created and controlled by Jews. In his book [*The International Jew*](#), Henry Ford complained about the Jewish takeover of the Broadway theater. However, the Jews, he continued, never had “to drive the Gentiles out of” the film industry, “because the Gentiles never had a chance to get in it.” Ford claimed that “The motion picture influence of the United States, of the whole world, is exclusively under the control, moral and financial, of the Jewish manipulation of the public mind.” The Jews were able to subvert the morals of Americans because

the stage and the cinema represent the principal cultural element of 90 percent of the people. What the average young person absorbs as to good form, proper deportment, refinement as contested with coarseness, correctness of speech or choice of words, customs and feelings of other nations, fashion of clothes, ideas of religion and law, are derived from what is seen at the cinema and theater. The masses' sole idea of home and life of the rich is derived from the stage and the movies (p. 153).

Any business, Ford continued, which “frankly brutalizes taste and demoralizes morals should not be permitted to be a law unto itself.” As a result of the twin threat of Jewish Bolshevism and Hollywood subversion of morals, many legislatures throughout the '20s were threatening government imposed censorship of the movies. It was the threat of a boycott in 1934 that prompted Harry Warner to warn MGM executive Harry Rapf, whose son toured the Soviet Union in the summer of 1934, “I don't want to talk to no g*d**** Communist. Don't forget you're a Jew. Jewish Communists are going to bring down the wrath of the world on the rest of the Jews.”

The wrath of the world, it turns out, was more benign in America than in Germany, but the reaction took place there as well. In America, it took the form of a boycott of the Warner theaters in Philadelphia. Organized by Cardinal Dougherty, the city's Catholic bishop, the boycott was costing Warner \$100,000 a week in the depths of the Depression and causing him to weep “tears as big as horse turds” at corporate meetings. Warner and the rest of Hollywood's Jewish moguls finally agreed to the Production Code as their way out of financial ruin.

Ford admired the Catholic resistance to Jewish Hollywood, even before the imposition of the Code. Unlike Protestant clergymen, who were regularly ridiculed in Hollywood films,

The Catholic clergy very soon made themselves felt in opposition to this abuse of their priestly dignity, and as a result of their vigorous resentment the Jew climbed down. You now never see a priest made light of on the screen. But the Protestant clergyman is still the elongated, sniveling, bilious hypocrite of anti-Christian caricatures.

Ford felt that the movies were the rehearsal for revolution in America. The Jews were using the screen as part of their “traditional campaign of subversion.” The movie screen also served “as a rehearsal stage for scenes of anti-social menace. There are no uprisings or revolutions except those that are planned and rehearsed. . . . Successful revolution must have a rehearsal. It can be done better in the motion pictures than anywhere else: this is the ‘visual education’ such as ever the lowest brow can understand.”

Before long it became clear that when the Jews came to America, they brought revolution with them. With a Jewish population which represented half the percentage of the Jewish population in Russia, America had a communist party in which over 50 percent of its members came from Jewish families. Many of these Jews changed their names when they came to America, where they continued their revolutionary activity, much to the consternation of people like Ford and Coughlin. Some of the Jewish revolutionaries were born in America and then traveled back to Russia. Israel Amter was born in the United States of America in 1881. In 1923 he traveled to Russia, where he became a member of the EKKI. He then changed his name to “John Ford” and returned to New York, where he led the communist party. In 1921, Josef Pogany, former commissar under Bela Kun in the Hungarian Soviet Republic, joined the Komintern, which in 1922 shipped him off to America, where he took the name “John Pepper” and became *de facto* head of the Communist Party in America. A Ukrainian Jew by the name of Jacob Golos, under the cover name of “Timmy” created a spy network that included the Vassar-educated spy

Elizabeth Bentley, who achieved her 15 minutes of fame when she testified before the McCarthy committee hearings in the '50s.



A POSTER DEPICTING TROTSKY (LEV DAVIDOVICH BRONSTEIN)

Trotsky himself said that the Jews would play a decisive role in bringing the revolution to America. In an interview published in 1934 by the magazine *Class Struggle*, Trotsky claimed that "Jewish workers of foreign extraction will play a decisive role in bringing about the American proletarian revolution." Is it

any wonder that Henry Ford was upset? *Anti-Bolshevist* magazine wrote that the reaction against Russian Bolshevism was so great that it was causing “a new wave of anti-Semitism” even in America. Even in America, which had had no revolution of the sort that had taken place in Russia, Germany and Hungary, Louis Marshall noticed that the term “Jewish Communism” was making the rounds.

Given what happened in Europe in reaction to Jewish Bolshevism, the big unanswered question dogging Roth’s book is why the same thing didn’t happen here. Or, more importantly, why he fantasizes that it did. In his NPR interview with Roth, Robert Siegel addresses the question of why it didn’t happen here by asking Roth if it were “a lucky break or was the American experience essentially different.” Roth answered by saying that it was both, which is another way of saying that he doesn’t know the answer. He’s less ambiguous in his book, where he attributes the lack of pogroms to “guarantees embedded in the US Constitution,” which “combined with long-standing American democratic traditions, made it impossible for a final solution to the Jewish problem to be executed in America as rapidly or efficiently as on a continent where there was a thousand-year history of anti-Semitism deeply rooted in the common people and where Nazi rule was absolute.”

So we’re back to the standard explanation once again. Which is to say, it didn’t happen here because Christianity, the real root of anti-Semitism, wasn’t as strong here as in Europe. Of course, there is all sorts of evidence, especially in Roth’s book, that contradicts this explanation. The whole threat of anti-Semitism in *Plot* is based on the presence of the Catholic Church in Newark and elsewhere, a presence which causes severely ambivalent feelings in young Philip. At one point he is filled with loathing for the Catholic Church; at another he wants to run away to the Catholic orphanage run by German nuns. Roth’s “nightmarish vision of America’s anti-Semitic fury roaring eastward through the pipeline of [Route] 22” is based on the premise that America’s anti-Semites are all God-fearing Christians, or that all God-fearing Christians are anti-Semites. That, of course, means that it should have happened here, especially if, as many indicate, Christianity is stronger here than in sensual secular Europe.

In his review of *Plot* in *The New York Times*, Frank Rich tries to explain Roth’s fears by connecting them to the Bush administration in the wake of 9/11, even though Roth advised against reading the novel as a “roman a clef of current times,” in the same paper. Rich sees in Lindbergh, “a president [who] can use fear . . . to impose a dangerous *idee fixe*” on America, an obvious reference to George W. Bush. When Rich reads *Plot*, what strikes him is “the sinking sense that the ‘perpetual fear’ he describes is in some ways a cousin to the fear we live in now. Surely ‘perpetual fear’ defines our post 9/11 world—and the ruthless election-year politics of autumn 2004.” Rich then links the fear to American foreign policy. Even though Bush’s policy of preemptive war” is “FDR incarnate” and “the very antithesis, of Lindbergh’s isolationism,” the final results of that venture are not in yet:

In truth we’ve only just begun to be tested. We are still in the very early stages of two wars whose ends are nowhere in sight. The war in Iraq has already been pinned on Jewish Neoconservatives by Senator Fritz Hollings of South Carolina, a Kerry-supporting Democrat, as well as by right-wingers like the unrepentant Pat Buchanan, as if the non-Jewish president and vice president were not among its architects.

So, if the war in Iraq goes bad (or worse) then, the Jewish Neoconservatives will be held accountable, and the pogroms will break out in Kentucky? Once again, politics becomes a pretext for paranoid fantasy. What links Rich and Roth is a common frame of mind, not an objective reading of American foreign policy.

There is much in Roth's book, on the other hand, that doesn't fit in with Rich's analysis. Roth himself disputes the claim that it's about 9/11, claiming that he began it in January of 2001. Roth also claimed in an interview with John Freeman in the *Times-Picayune* that he "was very much trying to deal with these figures who were out of my childhood, some of whom were quite frightening to me as a child, like Father Coughlin." Roth, Freeman continues, "remembers Coughlin's Sunday night radio addresses—which often included attacks on prominent Jewish figures—as vividly as he remembers hearing Hitler's voice on the radio."

But why should Roth, who sits atop the literary world, fear a Catholic priest who has been universally demonized for over 80 years now? Ultimately Roth's fears have no objective basis—something that should not be surprising in a novel that is based on an event that didn't happen. The basis of his fears is his hatred of Christianity. From a theological point of view, this shouldn't be surprising, because "perfect love drives out fear." If love drives out fear and if "hate is a Jewish virtue," as we read in [First Things](#) (cf. my piece "[Mock Messiah: Jewish Humor and Cultural Subversion](#)," *Culture Wars*, January 2004), then it is not surprising that Jews should be consumed by fear. In Greek, hate and fear are, after all, the same word, *phobos*. You fear what you hate; you hate what you fear. Christ is the only one who has shown us the way out of that vicious circle. But, according to Roth, Christ is precisely the problem. In giving one more expression of his fear in *Plot*, Roth fantasizes Irish Catholics showing up in Newark, "seeking vengeance against the Christ-killers of the Jewish Third Ward." All of the post-Vatican II assurances from liberal clerics have left Roth unconvinced. He still thinks that Jews are Christ-killers. At certain moments he exults in the fact; at other moments it leaves him obviously uneasy.

After following an suspecting goy home—a game that young Philip plays with his young friend Earl—they peer into the goy's front window and see a Christmas tree in his living room, and then Earl whispered, "See the top? At the very top of the tree—see that? it's Jesus." The vision Jesus becomes an epiphany of sorts for little Philip:

*This then was the culmination of our quest—Jesus Christ, who by their reasoning was everything and who by my reasoning had f***ed everything up because if it weren't for Christ there wouldn't be Christians, and if it weren't for Christians there wouldn't be anti-Semitism, and if it weren't for anti-Semitism there wouldn't be Hitler, and if it weren't for Hitler, Lindbergh would never be president, and if Lindbergh weren't president. . . . [his ellipsis].*

When the goy invites the two boys in for a cup of hot chocolate, Earl shouts, "Beat it, Phil—it's a fairy!" and both boys run away.

Young Philip is both attracted and repulsed by Christ, who is both weak and strong at the same time, in a way that Roth cannot understand. On the one hand, he wants to run away to either the German Catholic orphanage in Newark or Father Flanagan's Boys Town. On the other hand, he fears "the orphans, the priests, the nuns and the parochial school whip," although it seems unlikely that Catholic whips would be used on Jewish boys. Like other Jewish children, little Philip "would generally cross the street on the rare occasions we saw them swishing our way in their witchy attire." Like the sexually deviant Roth of *Portnoy's Complaint*, the young Philip "couldn't manage to be anywhere near a nun, let alone a pair of them, without a mind awash in my none-too-pure Jewish thoughts," even though the nuns have treated him with kindness: "the taller of the nuns smiled down" at Philip when she meets him on the bus, "and with a vague sadness in her quiet voice—perhaps because the Messiah had come and gone without my knowing it—commented to her companion, 'What a well-scrubbed cute little boy.'"



THE LYNCHING OF LEO FRANK

Is Roth afraid that this nun is going to lead a pogrom through Newark? Well, yes, in a way he is, but the idea is connected to his “none-too-pure Jewish thoughts,” something that he develops later on when he discusses the lynching of Leo Frank in Georgia. Frank was accused of molesting 13-year-old Mary Phagan, an employee in his factory. According to Roth, “Hanging ‘the sodomite’” Frank from a tree in Marietta, Georgia, Mary Phagan’s hometown, was “a public warning to other ‘Jewish libertines’ to stay the hell out of the South and away from their women.” Since Roth described the behavior and thinking of the “Jewish libertines” so well in *Portnoy’s Complaint*, a jury would have no trouble convicting them even if they weren’t lynched.

Fear, in other words, may be created by hatred, but it is compounded by guilt. According to Roth’s own account, the Jews have behaved abominably in America, after America welcomed them from the pogroms of Russia. Roth at one point tells us that as a child, he had already “begun to think of myself as a little criminal because I was a Jew.” Roth makes statements like this to elicit sympathy, but even in doing this he points us again to guilt. Judging from his memoir-like novels there is enough personal guilt to warrant any number of powerful feelings, but since this is an essentially ethnic book, we’re talking about ethnic guilt as well. To begin with, Roth feels guilt about the Jewish invasion of America. America, as Rabbi Lapin never tires of saying, treated the Jews well, and Jews like Philip Roth repaid America by promoting cultural subversion. Portnoy is a Jew whose main happiness consists in debunking the beliefs of the *goyim* while at the same time defiling their women, something he did while on a congressional committee in Washington: “Yes,” he tells his analyst,

I was one happy yiddel down there in Washington, a little Stern gang of my own, busily exploding Charlie’s honor and integrity, while simultaneously becoming lover to that aristocratic Yankee beauty

whose forbears arrived on these shores in the seventeenth century. Phenomenon known as “hating your Goy and Eating One Too.”

When Philip’s father drives from Newark to Kentucky and back again to rescue Sheldon Wishnow, Roth takes the opportunity to turn the trip into a symbol of Jewish migration to America. “An analogy could be made,” Roth tells us, describing the drive to Kentucky,

to the uninvited white settlers who first poured through the Appalachian barrier into the favorite hunting grounds of the Delaware and Algonquin tribes, except that instead of alien, strange looking whites affronting the local inhabitants with their rapaciousness, these were alien, strange-looking Jews provocative merely by their presence. This time around, though, those violently defending their lands from usurpation and their way of life from destruction weren’t Indians led by the great Tecumseh, but upright American Christians unleashed by the acting president of the United States.



THE ASSASINATION OF TSAR ALEXANDER II

No country on the face of the earth, not even Poland, was as welcoming of the Jews as America. Now the grandchildren of the Jews who escaped the pogroms which followed the assassination of the Czar in 1881 are fantasizing about pogroms once again, and the rest of us are forced to wonder why. Roth has done us all a service in this regard by giving us insight into the troubled psyche that produces these fantasies. It is ultimately Roth’s hatred of the *goyim*, not any historical precedent, which allows him to fantasize the pogrom as coming from places like Kentucky and Detroit and Newark’s Catholic ethnic neighborhoods:

in Newark, there was a heavily Jewish neighborhood abutting large communities of working-class Irish, Italians, Germans, and Slavs that were already home to a goodly number of bigots. The assumption was that these people wouldn't require much encouragement to be molded into a mindless destructive mob by the pro-Nazi conspiracy that had successfully plotted the riot in Detroit.

"The assumption?" Whose assumption, we are forced to ask, other than Roth's? Roth fails to see that if there was anti-Semitism in those communities, it grew out of the excesses of Jewish Bolshevism, the news of which got transported from places like Budapest, Warsaw, and Munich to places like Newark, Hamtramck and South Bend. The ethnic communities communicated regularly with their European counterparts, something that caused Louis Wirth considerable concern. Catholics were resolutely anti-Communist. Jews were just as resolutely pro-Communist. Yet, in spite of the animosity, there were no pogroms in America. Roth fails to see that "it didn't happen here" because the communists never came to power in America. If they had, there might have been a bloody reaction here, just as Lindbergh predicted. In the final analysis, Roth's fear may be a function of his cultural power. If the Jews of eastern Europe were held responsible for the excesses of Bolshevism, is someone going to be held accountable for acts of cultural terrorism like *Portnoy's Complaint* and *The Plot against America*? Are the Neoconservatives ever going to be held accountable for the debacle in Iraq?



JOHN TURTURRO AS RABBI LIONEL BENGELSDORF - HBO

Roth's novel falls apart at the end because of the incoherence of his rage and his ambivalence toward those he hates. What could have been plotted as a thriller switching back and forth between the individuals caught up in events, turns out to be turgid and anti-climactic. Roth, as if frightened by his own fantasies, announces that Roosevelt is back in the White House and that, therefore, everything is okay in a weird sort of flash-forward that ruins the plot, which then spins along in the following manner: Walter Winchell is assassinated "for speaking his mind in the state of Kentucky . . . by the Nazis of America"; Mrs. Wishnow, Philip's neighbor, who had been shipped to Kentucky to get Americanized, is murdered by a raging Nazi mob and left in "a drainage ditch alongside a potato field in the flat country

just south of Louisville.” Lindbergh flies to Louisville to calm the mob, but on the way back home his airplane mysteriously disappears, making Burton Wheeler president “now to inflict on us the laws we knew to have been imposed by the Nazis on the Jewish children in Germany,” even though “Hitler had already settled on [Henry Ford] as Lindbergh’s successor.” Roth’s father and brother have to drive to Kentucky, at much personal peril, given the number of anti-Semites lurking just west of the Hudson River, to rescue Mrs. Wishnow’s son. And, best of all, Rabbi Bengelsdorf, the quisling German Jew who speaks with a Southern accent (to give some indication of the depth of his villainy, I suppose) “is taken into custody by the FBI under suspicion of being among the ringleaders of the Jewish conspiratorial plot against America.”

Again, we’re back in the Jewish version of *Through the Looking Glass*. If Roth’s point is that Jews who collaborate with revolutionary regimes do so at their own peril, it is a point worth making. But the person most notorious for doing this sort of thing during the 1930s was not Henry Ford, or Charles Lindbergh, or Charles Coughlin, it was Roosevelt’s anti-Semitic hero Josef Stalin, who purged the Jews one by one at the show trials of 1937. It was Stalin who roared with laughter when Marcel Pauker, secretary for the Rumanian Central Committee, gave his imitation of Sinoviev’s Jewish accent crying out “Hear, O Israel, your God is one” just before he was executed by Stalin’s henchmen. If Roth had read Manfred Georg’s essay “The Jewish Revolutionary,” which appeared in the *Weltbuehne* in 1930, he would have known that “all revolutions devour their Jews.” The “revolutionary Jew” is carried high up on the revolutionary wheel, remains “for a long time on top,” but when he begins to sink the terror begins.” Von Bieberstein quotes Simon Dubnow, who wrote in his memoirs about “the terrible guilt” that “weighs down on Jews because of their participation in Bolshevism.”

So maybe that explains Roth’s fear. The fear found expression in 2004 when the State Department established an office to track anti-Semitism throughout the world, at the very pinnacle of Jewish cultural influence. Fear is always a by-product of the Revolution. Mary Wollstonecraft noticed it in Paris, when “Citizen Capet” was dragged off to be executed; Christopher Isherwood noticed it in Berlin. The Revolution invariably devours its Jews. Hence, Roth’s fear. Frank Rich noticed it in America in the wake of 9/11. The revolutionary Jews brought the revolutionary wheel in motion. The fact that many of them were crushed under the same wheel should not blind us to the responsibility they bear. That guilt will continue to have unfortunate psychological *sequelae*, most notably fear and guilt, as expressed in things like the novels of Philip Roth, until repentance and conversion take it away.